



# Introduction

## **INTRODUCTION**

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### **Purpose of Comprehensive Planning**

Everybody plans. Financial plans, travel plans, work plans and time plans are a part of our everyday life. Through planning we come to understand where we are now, and what must be done both now and in the future in order to achieve our goals.

Planning is also important for a community of individuals. It is an organized way of finding out what a community's needs are, and then setting goals and objectives for future development in the community. It offers a way to maintain a positive "quality of life" in revitalizing the community.

In the spring of 1992, a group of Bennet residents took part in a "Goals for Community Revitalization" workshop under the direction of the University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension Service. The group worked together to identify long-term and short-term goals for Bennet.

Through the process it became apparent that community planning was important and that the 1972 Community Development Plan should be updated. With that in mind the Village Board passed ordinance 1992-3 on October 12th, 1993 creating the Planning Commission. This ordinance charges the Commission with the responsibility of making and adopting plans for the physical development of the Village, including any areas outside its boundaries which bear relation to the planning of the Village.

Planning is a process more than it is a product. The plan provides the framework within which decisions are made on a day to day basis. Those decisions include the traditional "planning", such as zoning and subdivision control, as well as investment decisions by the private sector about investment of private capital in the growth and development of the community.

Changing technologies and the changing demographic characteristics of the population, including the rate of growth or decline of the population, will result in changing land use needs of the community. A key function of the plan is to provide direction and continuity regarding future uses of land and the public investments to support the growth of infrastructure items such as streets and utilities.

This Comprehensive Development Plan is an official document which will serve as a guide for decisions about future development in the Bennet area. The plan indicates, in a general way, how the Village should grow and develop during the next 10 years. It covers the entire Village area, plus the surrounding rural countryside.

## Background

### Geographic Location

Bennet, Nebraska, is located in Lancaster County, Nemaha Township, 2 miles south of State Highway 2 on State Highway 43. It is approximately 15 miles south and east of Lincoln, the county seat and state capital. Bennet provides its citizens with the benefits of small town living while being conveniently located near a highly developed metropolitan city.

### Governmental Framework and Taxation

The Village of Bennet has a Village Board consisting of five members, each elected for a term of four years. The Chairman is selected by the members of the Board. A Village maintenance person and a part-time Village Clerk are employed by the Village.

Table 1 gives some general financial information for the Village of Bennet for the years 1985, 1989, and 1994. The debt of the Village is on the water tower built in 1983 with bond money, and the sewage plant built in 1992 with a grant/bond combination.

*Table 1 - Financial Information, Village of Bennet*

	1985	1989	1994	Budget 1995
Actual Valuation	\$ 7,096,173	\$ 9,147,114	\$ 12,937,884	\$ NA
General Revenues	53,316	52,364	67,283	67,174
General Expenses	45,126	43,470	59,817	64,600
Total Debt	530,000	504,311	617,648	610,779

Source: Village of Bennet

The valuation of all property within the Village is determined by the Lancaster County Assessor. The tax levy is assessed based upon the valuation and the Village budget. Taxes are collected by the County Assessor and then returned to the Village. Table 2 shows recent fiscal trends for the Village. Between 1985 and 1994 there was a 39% increase in the valuation of property within the Village with a corresponding 29% decrease in the tax rate.

*Table 2 - Fiscal Trends, Village of Bennet, 1985-1994*

Year	Total Valuation	Tax Rate
1985	\$ 7,096,173	.7280
1986	7,265,428	.7157
1987	7,728,486	.5951
1988	7,833,043	.6060
1989	9,147,114	.5190
1990	9,216,499	.5251
1991	9,416,113	.5369
1992	10,159,310	.4899
1993	9,869,472	.5114
1994	12,937,884	.4043

Source: Lancaster County Assessor

A county-wide reevaluation of residential property was completed in 1994.

## **History**

Until the middle of the nineteenth century, the Nebraska Territory was inhabited only by roving tribes of plains Indians. Dense stands of tall, sod-forming grasses and scattered woodlands along streams covered the soil. In the spring of 1850 William Roggenkamp arrived with his family at his 120 acre homestead claim which, in time, was to become the site of the Village of Bennet.

In 1867, soon after Nebraska became a state, a group of men organized an independent company to build a railroad from Nebraska City to Lincoln. A town was needed in Section 10 near the Little Nemaha River, and in 1871 the railroad entered into negotiations with Roggenkamp for right-of-way through his land. He agreed to provide the land necessary, but only if they would plat a town site near his home, north of where the tracks were to be laid. The railroad agreed, and the finished plat was filed with the State authorities on July 29th, 1871. Originally named Bennett's Station for John Bennett, vice-president of the line, the last "t" was mysteriously dropped by 1872, and the town was incorporated October 1, 1881 as Bennet.

Bennet grew quickly, and by 1900 became a stable prosperous agricultural town. It was the social and commercial center for the farming population in the surrounding area, as well as for its own residents. Of course it must be remembered that at that time Lincoln was about as accessible to residents of Bennet, as say North Platte might be today. At one time Bennet boasted its own telephone company, gas company, hotel and bank. Other businesses filling the business district included a hardware store, grocery store, lumber yard, drug store, blacksmith shop, and funeral parlor. There was also a grain elevator and flour mill in town, and a limestone quarry east of town.

During the 1930's the population declined and the number of businesses dropped significantly. Area farms became bigger, and many of the younger people moved away to the big city in search of employment. Also, as transportation became more reliable and affordable, people began going to other towns for goods and services.

Today Bennet is best viewed in its regional setting with Lincoln as the focal point. Lincoln is the seat of city, county, and state government and has over 90% of the total population of Lancaster County. It exerts a major influence on the Village in terms of employment, commercial services and public facilities. Bennet must keep abreast of regional issues and opportunities in order to more effectively advocate its interests within the regional community.

In the past 25 years, the community has grown largely due to an influx of families who commute to work. The community-wide attitude survey of Bennet taken in October, 1992, found that 76% of the residents work in Lincoln. It must be remembered that, although they work elsewhere, they have chosen to make their home in Bennet. Of the people moving to Bennet in the last five years, 44% did so because of the small town atmosphere. They like the lower cost of living, cleaner air, good school system and rural atmosphere.

Many new small businesses have also started in Bennet since 1970. They must compete with the Lincoln market where residents do most of their shopping. To survive they must offer needed products or services at a highly competitive price and must also draw customers from more than the immediate Bennet area.

The future of Bennet depends upon the attitude of the people and the community leaders. It will take a group of hard-working local leaders, and a willingness of its citizens to work together, to make Bennet a better place in which to live.